

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2014-0017 EA

Project Name: Montrose County West-End Pit Free-Use Permit

Location: T. 46 N., R. 15 W., Sec.17, NW ¼ SW ¼, N.M.P.M.

Applicant: Montrose County

Background

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) has completed Environment Assessment (EA) #DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2014-0017, which analyses the effects of issuing a Free-Use Permit to Montrose County to expand their existing West-End gravel pit for the purpose of extracting 400,000 tons of mineral material. The material is needed to maintain county roads and the ten-year permit would expire in June, 2024.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2014-0017 EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The Proposed Action includes design features to reduce impacts.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

The operator-provided design features will be included in the sales contract authorization as special stipulations to the permit. The design features are directed toward reducing short and long term impacts to soil, air, water quality, wildlife values, and for regulatory compliance issues.

Context

The Proposed Action site is located east of the airport at Nucla, Colorado in an area having private surface ownership and Federal mineral estate ownership. The project proposes over a ten-year period to expand an existing gravel pit by excavating 400,000 tons of fill material consisting mostly of sand and gravel. Topsoil will be stripped and stockpiled resulting in an

increase in surface disturbance of 13.9 acres. Upon completion of the project, the site will be re-contoured, topsoil applied and the area seeded with a BLM approved seed mix.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

About 25 pounds of sediment per year is anticipated, which would impact water quality to a small degree. About 13.9 acres of vegetation would be removed. Sage-nesting birds could be impacted on the site. The area would be reclaimed after mining. Because this is an existing operation, there would be not be additional impact from traffic to roads and highways. There are not expected to be any significant adverse environmental impacts to any of the affected resources.

2) The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health and safety.

The mineral material excavation and transportation activities proposed are not expected to cause adverse public health effects. The Proposed Action includes design features regarding hazardous materials and health and safety. Safe mining standards and practices for the proposed mining activity are required in the operator's existing Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety mining permit, and these would continue.

3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project would not affect park lands, prime farmland, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas. A previous cultural inventory of the project area did not find any cultural sites.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The proposed mineral material excavation is not new to this area of western Colorado. This pit has been active since 1999. The Proposed Action was scoped internally where issues and concerns were brought forward and taken into consideration for analysis in preparing the EA. All concerns have been addressed in the EA.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The proposed mineral material excavation involved with this operation would utilize common methods employed in the mining industry and is not expected to produce uncertain or unique risks.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not set any known precedents or establish any principles for future decisions. The proposed mineral material excavation method has been commonly used by the mining industry for over a century.

7) *Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the Proposed Action in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the Proposed Action is contained in the Cumulative Impact section of the EA.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

The Proposed Action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

The Proposed Action will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat. These issues were analyzed in the EA.

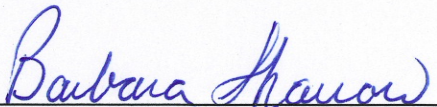
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Any authorization regarding this proposed project will stipulate that the operator must obtain all necessary approvals from other federal, state, and local agencies before proceeding.

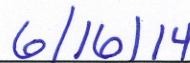
Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the San Juan / San Miguel Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Authorized Official:



Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office



Date